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Special session
11-15 April 1994
Agenda item 10

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS SPECIAL SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: W. McLENNAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland)

Chapter ____

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

(Agenda item 3)

Inter-Agency Task Force on Price Statistics, including the International Comparison Programme (ICP)

1. The report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Price Statistics, including the International Comparison Programme (E/CN.3/1994/9) was introduced by the representative of the Convener of the Task Force, the Statistical Office of the European Communities.
2. The discussion concentrated on the Task Force's mandate. Most members of the Commission expressed the view that improving coordination of world-wide consumer price index (CPI) work, especially in the context of the intercountry comparison of rates of inflation, should be the main priority for the Task Force. The Task Force was expected to address the issue by determining current practices, by considering whether existing standards were sufficient and by identifying any problems that might exist.
3. There was considerable discussion about the use being made of the output of ICP. It was accepted that the ICP methodology was still evolving and needed

refinement; significant comments were made, however, about the fact that results were being used without the users fully appreciating their experimental nature, thereby raising concern among government statisticians in some countries. It was agreed that there was a need for an objective appraisal and evaluation of ICP, but that that work would be of lower priority for the Task Force and would be undertaken after the CPI component had been dealt with.

Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Decided that coordination of work on consumer price indices was the first priority of the Task Force;

(b) Agreed that the objective appraisal and evaluation of ICP should remain on the Task Force's work programme but that it would be of second priority, following the work on consumer price indices;

(c) Requested the Task Force to clarify its work plan and formulate specific actions that were to be achieved before the forthcoming session of the Statistical Commission.



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Rapporteur: W. McLENNAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain
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Chapter ____.

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

(Agenda item 3)

Inter-Agency Task Force on Industrial and Construction Statistics

1. The report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Industrial and Construction Statistics (E/CN.3/1994/6) was introduced by the representative of the Convener of the Task Force, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). A background paper on the Task Force's survey on adherence to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) was made available to the Commission, and the representative of Canada on the Task Force provided an analysis of the results of the survey.
2. The Commission commended the Task Force on the efforts made in reducing duplication among international organizations and the reporting burden on countries in the field of industrial statistics. It also welcomed the work done by the Task Force in monitoring the degree of implementation of ISIC, Revision 3. However, concern was expressed about a number of barriers, such as a lack of coding manuals and commodity listings, encountered by developing countries in implementing ISIC, Revision 3. As a result, the Commission

stressed the need for increased collaboration between international organizations, developed countries and developing countries in adopting the changeover.

3. Several countries and agencies expressed concern about narrowing the current phase of work of the Task Force to exclude construction statistics. However, it was accepted that the mandate could not cover the work at the current time as the resources of the Task Force were fully used. Nevertheless the task force was asked how its programme might be expanded.

Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

- (a) Endorsed the second phase of the inquiry on country practices;
- (b) Requested the Task Force to prepare proposals on expanding its work programme to cover all statistics on the production of goods except agricultural goods;
- (c) Called on the international organizations concerned to give high priority to general documentation, including supporting concordances, product listings and coding manuals that would assist developing countries in addressing the various conceptual and practical issues faced in implementing ISIC, Revision 3;
- (d) Requested the Task Force to prepare a progress report on its work for the Commission at its twenty-eighth session.



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Rapporteur: William McLENNAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland)

Chapter ____.

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

Agenda item 3

Inter-Agency Task Force on Environment Statistics

1. The report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Environment Statistics (E/CN.3/1994/10) was introduced by the representative of the Convenor of the Task Force, the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat.
2. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the work of the Task Force - which had been achieved even though it had not been possible to organize a full meeting - including the work done on the planned Directory of Environmental Data. The Commission urged the Task Force members to make every effort to find the necessary resources for a future meeting.
3. The Commission stressed the importance of technical cooperation in environmental statistics and accounting, including the identification of available training facilities.
4. The Commission was of the opinion that the work of the Intersecretariat Working Group on National Accounts on satellite accounts should be taken into account by the Task Force on Environment Statistics.

Action taken by the Commission

5. The Commission:

(a) Requested the Task Force, in order to aid the coordination task across agencies, to compile a description of the different programmes and activities carried out in the areas of environmental statistics, indicators and accounting, showing the agencies involved, time-frames, progress, plans and resource constraints;

(b) Recommended that the Task Force draw up an action-oriented work programme based on specific coordination requirements;

(c) Requested the Task Force to report its conclusions and recommendations to the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination and the Commission at their forthcoming sessions.



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Rapporteur: William McLENNAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland)

Chapter ____.

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

(Agenda item 3)

Proposal for an Inter-Agency Task Force on Services Statistics

1. The report on the proposal for an inter-agency task force on services statistics was introduced by the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Statistical Activities of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC).
2. The Commission noted that its Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination had confirmed the establishment of a task force on services statistics, focusing on international trade in services in the first instance. The Commission expressed its appreciation to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for agreeing to be the convener of the task force.
3. The Commission recognized that international trade in services was an important subject requiring priority attention of an inter-agency group. However, several developing countries asked for a group to be set up to examine and consider services industry statistics in view of the emerging nature of this

sector in their economies, and the significant problems of measurement and accounting associated with the informal and household sectors. Some delegations, however, referred to the existence of the Voorburg Group on Services Industry Statistics and the OECD Group of Experts on Services Statistics, both of which were involved in conceptual and practical matters related to the measurement of services, and suggested that care be taken to avoid duplication of efforts.

Action taken by the Commission

4. The Commission:

(a) Agreed that a Task Force be set up, convened by OECD, focusing on international trade in services;

(b) Requested UNSTAT to investigate the best way in which the requirements of the developing countries could be met, and to report to the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination at their forthcoming sessions. It agreed that, if necessary, a separate group on services in the domestic economy could be established.



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Rapporteur: William McLENNAN (United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Northern Ireland)

Chapter ____.

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL STATISTICAL COOPERATION

(Agenda item 3)

Inter-Agency Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty

1. The report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Measurement of Poverty (E/CN.3/1994/12) was introduced by the representative of the World Bank as Convener of the Task Force.
2. The Commission discussed a wide range of issues concerning the proposed work of the Task Force. It noted the complexity of the work and the absence of international standards in the area of poverty statistics, but agreed that statistics on poverty were of considerable importance, at both the national and international levels, in analysis, policy formulation and design of programmes.
3. The Commission noted the need for better coordination of efforts for the collection and publication of statistics on poverty. The Commission considered various alternatives with a view to focusing the work of the Task Force on practical objectives on which progress could be made within one to two years.

4. The Commission welcomed the proposed participation in the work of the Task Force of all agencies involved with poverty issues, including the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Action taken by the Commission

5. The Commission requested the Task Force:

(a) To undertake a review of current practices in the measurement of poverty, with a view to determining the principal approaches, concepts, sources of data and use of poverty indicators, and the degree of data comparability;

(b) To identify international agencies engaged in work on the development of poverty data and consider how their compilation practices, analytical methodologies and dissemination might be better coordinated;

(c) To develop a plan, if possible, to make further progress in setting international standards;

(d) To report its findings and recommendations to the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination and the Commission at their forthcoming sessions, along with proposals for a further programme of work to assist countries in the measurement of poverty.
